HARAMBEE FLAME

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Gangs

(In the April edition of the FLAME, in an editorial entitled "Why The Gangs," we discussed several factors which contribute to the increase of gang activity in African communities in the U.S. In this follow-up editorial, we will address briefly the role that racism plays in the development of conditions out of which gangs sprout and address, more thoroughly, the issue of the special dilemma that this gang phenomenon forces upon our communities.)

Traditionally, gang membership has appealed to basically four desires on the part of youth: a desire for comraderie, a desire for a group identity, a desire for excitement, and a desire to exercise machismo while having the protection of a group. With the introduction of a large market for drugs into this scenario, a fifth desire has become important, a desire to make what is, for poor people, big money and to make it quickly.

So, what part does racism - institutional racism in particular - play in all this? First, there is the issue of group identity. While the degree to which this is true varies greatly, it is nonetheless the case that African people in this country share a sense of group identity based on color and on our common second-class status. Unfortunately, for most of us, that sense of group identity is not based on an awareness of common ancestry and a set of traditions and values attendant to that ancestry. Our sense of group identity, then, is somewhat fragile, leaving us vulnerable to attacks against our individual and collective sense of self by the institutions of the dominant Caucasian society.

These institutions, operating out of an ideology of white/Caucasian supremacy, function to promote and perpetuate that ideology and to promote and perpetuate the idea of African/black inferiority(in general, the inferiority of all groups comprised of persons of color). Three institutions in particular - the public school system, the Christian church, and the commercial media - function to attack our image of self.

The public school system attacks this image by presenting

distorted pictures of history in which African people play little or no significant part; by presenting distorted pictures of a world of literature, the visual arts, etc. in which the contributions of African people are generally omitted; and by presenting pictures of an arena of present-day political, social, and economic relations in which the dynamics of the white/Caucasian-supremacy concept are seen as natural, inevitable and justified.

The Christian church, including the so-called "black church," attacks our self-image by promoting the idea of Jesus having been a Caucasian(a great historical unlikelihood), as well as a part of "the trinity"(father, son, and holy spirit). The Christian church teaches us that humans are made in the image and likeness of God. As Dr. Frances Cress Welsing has so adroitly pointed out, if we believe that human beings are made in the image of God and God is a Caucasian, then our minds' logic places into question: What the hell are we, in that we are not Caucasians? When the story of the curse of Ham, and the many other allegories in which the color, black, is portrayed as denoting evil, is placed alongside the representation of Jesus as a Caucasian, the negative effects upon our self-image take on an even more devastating character.

Lastly, the commercial media comes along to provide the veritable "death-blow." Not only do television, radio, newspapers and magazines, etc. serve to "affirm" what the school system and the Christian church have already programmed us to accept but do so often under the guise of "entertainment." This is especially so in the case of television, which gives us real-fantasy-life and often contempoary characters for us to identify with and imitate. From the commercial media, we learn to equate wealth, power, intelligence, and beauty with whiteness.

The cumulative effect of these institutions' influence upon us is that, not only do we come to have a negative self-image, but fail to see as positive our group(the other African people in our neighborhoods) and any identification with it. Obviously this effect is not as strong

in some of us as it is in others. But it is sufficiently strong that it gives rise to a situation in which, in the minds of many of our youth, there is nothing about the body of African people in their particular neighborhoods which is sacred nor anything about the common interests of African people in general to which allegiance is to be given. To some degree, the gang takes the place of the community in the matters of sacredness and allegiance, and the community simply becomes a kind of hunting ground.

In the midst of all this, youth unemployment among African people in this country stands at about 50%. It is a combination of racism and profit motive on the part of business institutions and racism and economic cynicism on the part of governmental institutions which primarily account for this absurdly high unemployment figure. When we add together the economic poverty of many African families, the inability of the youths of these families to find work, and the financial dividends offered by drug sales, the sum frequently equals this question in the minds of these youth: Why should I go on being poor when there is such a killing to be made in the drug business?

As we can see, then, racism does play a clear role in this matter of the growth of gang activity in our communities. But, moving from causes of the problem to the problem itself, we discover that we are faced with an important conflict among and between ourselves: who these youth are and what they are doing. These Bloods, Crips, and so forth are our youth. Yet, they are acting against our interests. And somehow we must address both who they are and what they are doing.

There was a time in our economically poor communities in which it was considered an abomination for one to be a police informant. This was the case because we understood that the police did not represent our interests but those of "the white folks downtown." In addition, we had more of a sense of community then, and the extended-family network was often sufficiently strong so that we kept anti-community behavior on the part our youths and others in our community within what we might have viewed as "tolerable" levels. But, these days, "dropping a dime"

and being a "crime-stopper" are looked upon by many of us with no more than casual notice.

One of the things increased gang violence has done is to create, or maximize, a situation in which African communities may see their respective city governments and police departments as their friends and certain individuals and groups among themselves as their enemies. There is one hell of an irony in, for example, African people in New York demanding protection from gang activity from that same entity - the N.Y.P.D. - which was responsible for the murders of Michael Stewart, Eleanor Bumpers, and a number of other African folks in recent years. In most American cities in which we live, we are a minority and face a situation in which most elected and other government officials and members of police departments are Caucasians. And, lest maybe some of us have forgotten, racism is still the order of the day in the U.S. Local governments and police departments reflect that racism both in policies and practices.

During his address to the regional conference of the National Black Police Association, which was held at the Red Lion Inn in Omaha from April 28-30, State Senator Ernie Chambers put forth a hypothetical situation in which a pimp or drug-dealer in Omaha's African community were to disappear. In so posing this hypthetical situation, Ernie stated that racism in the Omaha Police Department is such that he does not want Caucasian police in the African community, but neither does he believe drug-dealers and pimps should go on being tolerated. He went on to state the hope that Omaha's African community and African police would be able to work together to address the issue of African-on-African crime. Overall, Ernie's remarks were reflective of the dilemma posed to us by gang and other activity in the African community by which African people are abused by other African people: Shall we go on expecting a racist police department to deal with our problems; shall we form, or improve upon, a special relationship with the African members of that department; or are we going to be forced to take matters into our own hands?

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FLAME Editorial Policy

The HARAMBEE FLAME, the monthly publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization(parent chapter of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, Inc.) is a pan-Africanist newsletter. This means that the FLAME's priority, with respect to news and views, is African people, events and developments which affect us and are, or should be, of concern to us. The FLAME does not recognize any artificial distinction between African people based solely on place of birth. Therefore, references to African people are made on the basis of our common ancestry. An exception to this policy is the reprinting of articles, or excerpts thereof, from other publications, in which cases we do not alter the terms used therein to fit our editorial policy.

Articles contained in the FLAME do not necessarily represent the official positions of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization unless they are accompanied by a statement identifying the views as being those of the organization. Generally speaking, all unsigned articles are by the editor, Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa(aka David Rice).

We encourage you to submit articles to the FLAME. Please enclose with your submission a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Articles should not exceed 900 words, though longer pieces will not be automatically rejected. Short stories are subject to the same restriction with respect to length. We also welcome poetry and graphics. Send your submissions to: HARAMBEE FLAME
Attn: Editor/Mondo
Harambee Afrikan Cultural Org.
P.O. Box 2500
Lincoln, NE 68502-0500

Note on poetry submissions: We are looking for poems that make effective use of imagery, that have beauty and power, and that do not sacrifice any of the above for the sake of rhyme and/or uniform rhythm patterns. Send stuff!

From Other Sources

National Afro-American Museum And Cultural Center Opens

In Wilberforce, Ohio

"'From Victory to Freedom: Afro-American Life in the Fifties' was unveiled to the public during three days of opening ceremonies that began Friday, April 15 and concluded Sunday, April 17. The museum...is the first nationally recognized museum that is dedicated to Afro-American history and culture...

"In its original planning, the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center is to be a complex developed in four phases. Architectural planning for the second phase, which will cost an estimated $20,000 is about a year away from completion. No funds have been allocated for the second phase: A children's center with an orientation theatre, exhibit and storage space and administrative offices...

"Phase III would be an art gallery with a library and manuscript division, exhibit and storage space and a cafeteria. Phase IV is planned to be an education division. ...

"Dr. John E. Fleming is the director. Vernon Courtney is the assistant director. Chief of Curatorial and Exhibitions is Marian J. Moore. Kriza Jennings is Chief of the Library and Manuscript Division. Juanita Moore is Chief of the Education Division."

-Above passages excerpted from "National Black Museum Opens With 50s Exhibit," which appears on page 1B of the April 21 edition of the COLUMBUS CALL & POST.

National Council For Black Studies Meets In Philadelphia

"...university educators from around the country were here for the 12th annual conference of the National Council For Black Studies(NCBS). Eurocentric bias in U.S.

scholarship, gender-bias in the male-dominated discipline of Black studies and the recent wave of Black student protests on predominantly white campuses made for corridor conversation as teachers moved through three tightly packed days of workshops and roundtables...

"Sanchez(Sonia) and others did...take notice of the move by some universities to require undergraduates to take a one-semester course either in non-Western culture or on issues dealing with women or minorities. The consensus was that such exposure to other cultures and perspectives might reduce racism...

"One of the most pressing problems educators face is the decline in Black enrollment in higher education...Between 1980 and 1984, Blacks were the only racial or ethnic group whose undergraduate enrollment declined..."

-Above passages excerpted from "Educators Survey Grim Campus Scene," which appears on page 9 of the April 27 edition of THE GUARDIAN. Note: In the March edition of the FLAME, we reported on an effort, led by the Black Student Union and other student organizations, to get the Stanford University Faculty Senate to approve the replacement of the Western Culture freshman requirement with a program called "CIV"(Culture, Ideas and Values). CIV emphasizes the roles played in and contributions made in literature and other humanities areas by Africans and other people of color. According to the April 11 edition of UNITY, the Faculty Senate voted 39-4 to replace the Western Culture Program.

A Perspective On African Political Progress In The U.S.

"...Black electoral successes have brought certain real gains to the Black community. Greater recruitment of Blacks to big city police departments has reduced police brutality in some major cities. City services are more regularly directed to Black neighborhoods, which were previously service-poor under white administrations. Sanitation services, repairs on sidewalks and public housing, refurbished schools and community service centers,

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Blacks in America

Celeste taps Black for utilities panel

Texas lawmen indicted in murder of Black

Honda and Blacks

Blacks and the Civil War

The above headlines were clipped from a variety of newspapers. In each case, "black" or "blacks" refers to African people in the U.S. Maybe, because you've grown accustomed to the use of "black" as a noun referring to African people, these headlines don't seem strange. But try this: substitute for "black"(s) "yellow"(s), "brown"(s), and "red"(s) as references to Asians, Mexicans, and Native Americans, respectively. Then ask yourself why we are the only people of color in this country who are identified as if we only had a skin color and no cultural and/or national or continental heritage.

even campaigns to stop plant closings and halt neighborhood commercial decay--all are visible signs in the daily life of Black voters that they finally 'have' somebody in city hall.

"However, Black electoral successes have tended to help mainly the relatively limited layer of the Black community that has been able to consolidate the gains of earlier struggles. A singular feature of the Second Reconstruction has been the introduction of a deeper social strati-

small businessmen, and public administrators benefitted the most from the government programs and limited affirmative action in universities and the professions.

"Black-dominate urban administrations were able to hand out city contracts to minority businesses as well as hire Black administrators and professionals. Studies show that employment gains under Black administrations are principally in middle-class professional and managerial positions. Over all, Blacks have lost ground as austerity forces reductions in the lower-level city government workforce.

"Nearly half of all Black women and 35 percent of Black men owe their job directly or indirectly to government spending. For the Black college graduate, the figure rises to 72 percent for women and 54 percent for men. The ground gained by the Black middle class is not in the private sector, but is highly dependent on local and national government outlays..."

-Above passages excerpted from page 12 of THE RAINBOW AND THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY - NEW POLITICS OR OLD, a Solidarity pamphlet edited by Joanna Misnik.

South African Death Squads

"...According to an article this month in the SUNDAY STAR of Johannesburg, the South African government has created a team of 'professional, highly trained hit men' known as 'Z-Squads International', which is allowed 'virtually un-

limited range of action and operational funds'...

"Citing U.S., French, British and Belgian intelligence officers in Paris, the STAR said the terror group is based in London and operates throughout western Europe. It reported that the name of Albie Sachs, an exiled South African lawyer working in Mozambique who was severely injured by a car bomb three days before the article appeared, was on a Z-Squad hit list of African National Congress (ANC) members and sympathizers.

"The paper also alleged that French security officials did nothing last year when their British counterparts warned them that ANC representative Dulcie September was among the squad's targets. It charged that a Z-Squad team was responsible for September's March 29 assassination, aided by Jean-Dominique Taosson, a far-right activist employed by the French interior ministry and the South African embassy..."

-Above passages excerpted from "Death Squads Exposed," which appears on page 8 of the April 18 edition of AFRICA NEWS.

Ethiopia And Somalia Resume Relations

"The northeast African countries of Ethiopia and Somalia have agreed to resume diplomatic relations...Under terms of the new agreement, the two countries' military forces would be pulled back at least nine miles from their common border. The Ethiopian government would also give back to Somalia the border settlements of Goldogob and Ballaballe, which it captured during a skirmish in 1982. The agreement also provides for the exchange of prisoners of war."

-Above passages excerpted from "Ethiopia And Somalia Resume Relations," which appears on page 13 of the April 29 edition of THE MILITANT.

(Continued on page 13).

Like Africans in Azania(So. Africa), we live in a society run by racist institutions. But, unlike Africans there, we Africans here are not involved in massive protests against the *imprisonment of hundreds and thousands of our people. And the reason is that, while several thousands of African men and women in Azania are being imprisoned for standing up for their people, most Africans imprisoned here in the U.S. have been busted for trying to "get over"(financially) for themselves, for assaulting or killing other African people, and/or for otherwise acting illegally on their own and for their own self-perceived interests. When Africans in America go to prison, they go to prison in isolation from their communities, with the attitude of people in those communities being such as to be expressed in the phrase, "good riddance."

With the increase in violence between gangs in our communities, there has been an increase in injuries and deaths of African people - often children - essentially caught in crossfire, felled by stray bullets, etc. This development is serving to further aggravate a set of circumstances in which our communities are being divided against themselves. In some African neighborhoods, there is the potential for a kind of wholesale division to be established between youth and older folks. In such a division, the youth, correctly seeing themselves as alien from the dominant Caucasian society, might come to view their older African neighbors as being allied with the Caucasian power symbols(the police) against them. In the meantime, the older folks might come to view the youth as persons alien to themselves, as persons they need protection from. To some degree, this is happening already.

As we can see, the situation is one that can become much more dangerous and much more destructive to our ability to move in harmony to address the many problems we have in common. We need to find solutions to the problem of gang violence and to numerous other situations with which we are afflicted. But our ability to do so shall continue to be severely limited by the tendency on the parts of many of us to think that we are incapable, as communities

of African people, of acting on our own collective behalf and under our own direction.

Our situation is not an impossible one to deal with, but is one that is difficult and complex. And our choices are not limited to either doing nothing or becoming agents for Caucasian-run police departments. If a group of Muslims in Bedford-Stuyvesant's African community can declare a stretch of neighborhood to be off-limits to drug-dealing and enforce that declaration, African people all over this country can do likewise. If African youth can organize for purposes that are destructive, African youth can, with proper motivation and guidance, organize, or be organized, for purposes that are constructive. .

-Editor

*In an article in the May 28 edition of the CHICAGO TRIBUNE by Steven Whitman, it is stated that the imprisonment rate for African people in the U.S. is the highest in the world. South Africa ranks second.

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Aboriginal Deaths In Police Custody

"Ginger Samson, 44, is one of the most recent Australian Aboriginals to die in police custody(See IN THESE TIMES, April 13). Jan Mayman of the GUARDIAN of London reports that Samson was found dead in a cell of the Roebourne, Western Australia, police station in early April. Some police sources have said Samson suffered a 'closed head injury' and a hairline fracture of the skull. Other reports say he died from an epileptic fit complicated by drinking. Late last year the Australian government established a royal commission to investigate Aboriginal deaths in custody. Establishing the commission was a belated response to a protest movement touched off by the 1983 death of one of Samson's relatives, 16-year-old John Pat, who died of a brain hemorrhage following a police beating. Within a week of Samson's death, another Aboriginal, Benjamin William Morrison, 55, was found hanged in his Roebourne cell after being arrested for disorderly conduct. With the Morrison hanging the royal commission now has 105 custody deaths to investigate."

-Above article reprinted from "Another Dead Aboriginal," which appears on page 4 of the May 4-10 edition of IN THESE TIMES.

Mozambique And Nicaragua Sign Treaty Of Cooperation

"...Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano...was in Nicaragua April 4-8 as part of an official tour of Latin America that also included visits to Argentina, Cuba, and Brazil. In Nicaragua he met with President Daniel Ortega, other FSLN(Sandinista National Liberation Front) and government officials, and leaders of the Sandinista Youth. During Chissano's visit, representatives of the Nicaraguan and Mozambican governments signed a treaty of cultural, technical, and scientific cooperation..."

-Above passages excerpted from "Mozambique President Visits Nicaragua," which appears on page 14 of the May 6 edition of THE MILITANT.

Back In Time

Back in the year 1706 a woman in Central Africa was burnt at the stake holding her baby son. This was Donna Beatrice, otherwise known as Kimbaveta. She, too, was in the tradition of trying to Africanize Christianity. Some of the changes she espoused were quite fundamental, perhaps more fundamental than those of the Kimbanguist church. For example, she argued that many of the Apostles of Jesus were not Hebrew at all - they were Africans. She insisted that the Patron Saint of Portugal was an African. She argued that Jesus Christ never prohibited polygamy. But her most controversial assertion was that a virgin birth was not a monopoly of the mother of Jesus - that an African woman was as capable, with God's help, of having a virgin birth as any woman in Bethlehem or Nazareth.

These were of course very radical assertions. And when Donna Beatrice tried to demonstrate the virgin birth theory by having a baby son of her own, it was almost too much for those converted to Europeanized versions of Christianity. The Portuguese missionaries and Portuguese officials advising the old Congo kingdom set to work, persuading the converted rulers of the king on to take action against this female messiah. And so she was burnt at the stake holding her son. ...

Source: THE AFRICANS: A TRIPLE HERITAGE
by Ali A. Mazrui

Announcements

Dr. Abu Aberry, a native of the west African nation of Ghana and a member of the University of Nebraska at Omaha Black Studies Department, will be giving the main address at the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization annual banquet to be held at the State Prison in Lincoln(14th & Pioneer Blvd.). The date for the banquet has been changed from the 8th. to the 22nd. of May. Time is from 5-8:30 p.m. In addition to the address by Brother Aberry, there will be various cultural performances and a meal comprised of: jollof rice(a west African beef and vegetable dish); collard, turnip, and mustard greens; fruit salad; egg plant; banana nut cake; bean pie; ice cream; and beverages. We encourage our Brothers and Sisters from the African communities of Omaha and Lincoln to attend. We are asking a $2 donation per person. To make your reservation, either write to the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization at P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE.: 68502-0500. Or call 471-3161(ext. 380 or 379) between noon and 3 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Afro-American Arts International is interested in leasing the rights to produce and sell reproductions of art work by Afro-American artists. We are now accepting slides and photographs of art works to be considered for inclusion in the October 1988 Furniture Market. If after reviewing your slides/photographs your work is accepted, we will send you a copy of our contract for your review. For additional information, write to: Afro-American Arts International; Suite 805; First Citizens Bank Plaza; P.O. Box 443; High Point, N.C.; 27261.

KZUM(89.3 FM) is a non-profit, community-access radio station in Lincoln, Nebraska. While it is not an African-run station, it does air several programs that feature African-American classical music("jazz"), blues, reggae, etc. This is a partial listing: "Rare & Hot Jazz"(Monday, 12:30-2:30 p.m.), "Another Blue Monday"(Monday, 2:30-6:00 p.m.), "I Love Gabrielle Show"(Tuesday, 12:30-2:30 p.m.), "Jazz In The Afternoon"(12:30-2:30 p.m., Wednesday), "African Connection"(Wednesday, 7:00-8:00 p.m.), "Women's Blues & Boogie"(Friday. 12:30-2:30 p.m.), "Freedom Jazz Project", Saturday, 11:00 p.m.-1:00 a.m.)

MALCOLM X

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